United Nations E/ICEF/2019/4

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 December 2018

Original: English

For decision

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
First regular session 2019
5–7 February 2019
Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

Management response to the formative evaluation of the Out-of-School Children Initiative

Summary

The formative evaluation of the Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) provides an assessment of progress towards the overall goal of achieving a substantial and sustainable reduction in the number of children who are out of school. The evaluation was conducted in a proficient and methodical manner. Evidence was gathered from a desk-based review, an online survey, interviews and focus group discussions as well as field visits to seven countries. While the evaluation could not reflect lessons from all of the more than 90 countries engaged in OOSCI, in general the evaluation provides a balanced and properly justified analysis together with a sound set of recommendations.

The evaluation confirms that OOSCI has delivered tangible outputs and has proven its relevance, effectiveness and utility, although heightened awareness at the national and international levels of out-of-school children has not been matched by the allocation of adequate resources on a sustainable basis. UNICEF management recognizes that a robust response to the recommendations of the evaluation offers the opportunity to build on the successes of OOSCI to increase the number of children able to realize their right to education.

The findings and recommendations of the evaluation will be used to refine the OOSCI theory of change for all levels of basic education, maintaining a focus on pre-primary education; expand the scope of the initiative to include adolescents of upper-secondary school age as well as non-formal forms of education; strengthen the focus on implementation; build partnerships between Governments, donors and non-governmental organizations to support the translation of policies into practice; and put in place monitoring arrangements to enable a summative evaluation of the initiative in the future. By conducting these modifications in consultation with both regional and country offices, it is expected that the process will help to build the capacity of

* E/ICEF/2019/1.
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UNICEF staff, while improving results and overall programming.

Elements of a decision for consideration by the Executive Board are provided in section II.

I. Key evaluation recommendations and UNICEF management response

Action	*Responsible section(s)*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage:* *Not started* *Under way* *Completed* *Cancelled*	*Supporting documents*
Evaluation recommendation 1 The theory of change for the Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) should be revised to reflect the key elements of inclusion to ensure that the needs of all out-of-school children are met at all levels of the basic education cycle, while ensuring that the initiative focuses on identifying strategies and policies that empower Governments to eliminate the lack of participation at the pre-primary level, such as sustainable, pro-poor financing for the subsector. **Management response: Agree** UNICEF agrees to revise the theory of change for OOSCI to incorporate all levels of education from pre-primary to upper secondary as well as the financing implications of interventions for out-of-school children, while still maintaining a special emphasis on the crucial early years of education. An expert group consisting of staff from UNICEF headquarters and regional and country offices as well as such partners such as the Global Partnership for Education, the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) will be established to revise the theory of change and create new tools and methodologies for developing profiles of out-of-school children.				
Action 1.1 Establish an expert group, including headquarters, regional and country offices and partners, such as the Global Partnership for Education, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and ILO, to revise the OOSCI theory of change and develop new tools and guidance.	Headquarters	December 2018	Under way Members of the expert group have been identified. Terms of reference, including a revision of the theory of change and the development of new tools and guidance, have been drafted.	Terms of reference for expert group
Action 1.2 Revise OOSCI theory of change	Headquarters, in collaboration with regional offices and external partners	March 2019	Not started The revised theory of change will be included in a guidance note that will be circulated to OOSCI partners and uploaded to the OOSCI website (allinschool.org).	Guidance note

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Evaluation recommendation 2 OOSCI should expand its focus to harness the expertise and capabilities of OOSCI technical partners to seek effective and efficient strategies and solutions that support the implementation and comprehensive monitoring of policies in key contexts in which programming for different profiles of out-of-school children occurs and to attract resources to assure the sustainability of implementation. **Management response: Agree** UNICEF management agrees that OOSCI should focus on strategies to support policy implementation and monitoring and UNICEF will engage technical partners in this work. Once the theory of change has been revised, the expert group will develop and circulate new operational guidance for conducting OOSCI country studies, including on strengthening links with such existing processes as the development of education sector plans and on attracting sustainable financing, particularly from domestic resources, for strategies that meet the needs of out-of-school children.				
Action 2.1 The expert group will develop and circulate new operational guidance that includes strategies to support policy implementation and monitoring.	Headquarters, in collaboration with regional offices and external partners	March 2019	Not started A guidance note will be circulated to OOSCI partners and uploaded to allinschool.org.	Guidance note
Action 2.2 Develop and share documents on good practice in policy and programming from OOSCI country reports.	Headquarters	July 2019	Not started Notes on good practice will be circulated to OOSCI partners and uploaded to allinschool.org.	Notes on good practice
Action 2.3 Develop a technical support system to maintain up-to-date data on out-of-school children from recent household surveys.	Headquarters	March 2019	Under way Conceptual framework and implementation approach are in development.	Multiple indicator cluster survey-education analysis for global equity and learning country report
Evaluation recommendation 3 The methodological framework for OOSCI should be reoriented towards the entire basic education cycle (i.e., pre-primary through upper secondary) and target key vulnerable groups that cut across all profiles of out-of-school children. It should generate explicit strategies that address the learning needs of these groups, including but not limited to embracing appropriate forms of learning for them and responsive modalities for delivering those learning opportunities.				

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Management response: Agree UNICEF agrees that the OOSCI methodological framework should be expanded to include adolescents of upper-secondary school age and other forms of education outside formal schooling, such as alternative and flexible education programmes. The expert group will develop the tools to create statistical profiles of adolescents who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and guidance on incorporating non-formal education in the OOSCI analysis.				
Action 3.1 The expert group will develop and circulate tools to create statistical profiles of NEET adolescents.	Headquarters, in collaboration with regional offices and external partners	July 2019	Not started Tools to create statistical profiles of NEET adolescents will be included in the revised OOSCI Operational Manual.	Revised OOSCI Operational Manual
Action 3.2 The expert group will develop and circulate guidelines on incorporating non-formal education, different forms of learning and responsive modalities in the OOSCI analysis.	Headquarters, in collaboration with regional offices and external partners	March 2019	Not started The guidelines will be included in a guidance note that will be circulated to OOSCI partners and uploaded to allinschool.org.	Guidance note
Action 3.3 Develop a training course on inclusive education sector planning for children with disabilities, who constitute one of the most marginalized groups of out-of-school children.	Headquarters, in collaboration with regional offices and partners, including the UNESCO-International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), the World Bank, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great	September 2019	Under way The course is being designed based on a preparatory round table on inclusive education involving eight country delegations, held with UNESCO-IIEP in July 2018, and a capacity-building workshop on inclusive education in Africa involving 12 country delegations, held with the World Bank and USAID in October 2018.	Report from inclusive education planning round table with UNESCO-IIEP and report from capacity-building workshop with the World Bank and USAID.

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	Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)			
Evaluation recommendation 4 While maintaining the usual focus on supporting Governments to discharge their mandate to extend learning opportunities to all children, OOSCI should facilitate processes for assembling the right type of partners, including but not limited to government officials, that have a clear potential to bring new ideas and/or offer new entry points for programming for out-of-school children. **Management response: Agree** UNICEF agrees that it is essential to continue to build coalitions and partnerships to respond to emerging issues and changing situations, including greater engagement by civil society, multilateral and bilateral agencies, religious organizations, the private sector and non-traditional donors. UNICEF (Education Section) will commission research and issue briefs on engaging with other service providers, including low-cost private schools and Quranic schools, and encourage country offices to promote the inclusion of civil society and other stakeholders in local education groups that advise partner Governments and advocate for specific groups of marginalized children.				
Action 4.1 The Programme Division (Education Section) will commission further research and issues briefs on engaging with other service providers, including low-fee private schools (LFPS) and Quranic schools.	Headquarters	July 2019	Under way A research project to review low-fee private schools was completed in February 2018.	Project report "Analysis of low-fee private schools in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, East Asia and Latin America and recommendations"
Action 4.2 The Programme Division (Education Section) will lead the development and publication of an overall analysis of the data and lessons learned from OOSCI country studies, with support from the Data, Research and Policy Division.	Headquarters	March 2019	Not started An analysis of OOSCI country studies will be circulated and uploaded to allinschool.org.	Analysis of OOSCI country studies

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Action 4.3 The expert group will circulate guidance to country offices to continue to promote the inclusion of civil society and other stakeholders in local education groups that advise partner Governments and advocate for specific groups of marginalized children.	Headquarters, in collaboration with regional offices and external partners	March 2019	Not started Guidance to country offices on promoting the inclusion of civil society and other stakeholders will be included in a guidance note circulated to OOSCI partners and uploaded to allinschool.org.	Guidance note
Evaluation recommendation 5 OOSCI should strengthen all its programmatic elements to set up the initiative to yield evaluable information on the stated goal of achieving a substantial and sustainable reduction in the number of out-of-school children. This includes ascertaining the internal and external coherence of the initiative and the feasibility of achieving the intended results and ensuring that adequate monitoring and evaluation inputs and systems are put in place to enable systematic assessments of the OOSCI contribution. **Management response: Agree** While the formative evaluation has demonstrated that OOSCI has made a valuable contribution to efforts to reduce the number of children who are out of school, UNICEF agrees that the expert group should establish indicators and monitoring arrangements to collect both quantitative and qualitative data that will enable the progress of the initiative to be systematically assessed in both humanitarian and development contexts in the future.				
Action 5.1 The expert group will develop indicators of achievement for OOSCI in humanitarian and development contexts as well as means to assess the internal and external coherence, and will circulate guidance on monitoring the initiative in partner countries.	Headquarters, in collaboration with regional offices and external partners	March 2019	Not started Guidance to country offices on indicators of achievement will be circulated and uploaded to allinschool.org.	Guidance note on monitoring OOSCI
Action 5.2 Revise the OOSC Operational Manual to include a template for country-level monitoring frameworks in relation to policy recommendations.	Headquarters	July 2019	Not started A revised OOSCI Operational Manual will be circulated to OOSCI partners and uploaded to allinschool.org.	Revised OOSCI Operational Manual

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Action 5.3 Extend the existing UNICEF database on out-of-school children to cover both upper-secondary education and at-risk students in lower- and upper-secondary education for national, regional and global monitoring.	Headquarters	March 2019	Not started A data analysis consultant will be hired to extend the database and produce OOSC fact sheets.	

II. Draft decision

The Executive Board

Takes note of the following documents presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session of 2019:

(a) Formative evaluation of the Out-Of-School Children Initiative, its executive summary (E/ICEF/2019/3) and its management response (E/ICEF/2019/4);

(b) Independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, its executive summary (E/ICEF/2019/5) and its management response (E/ICEF/2019/6).